

City of Newton



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HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL

September 16, 2009

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM. Present were: Joe Frassica, Dena Salzberg, Julia Feldman, Drs. Steven Colchamiro and Eugenia Marcus, Linda Walsh, Director of Health Services, and J. David Naparstek. Marva Serotkin contacted the department to indicate that she would be unable to attend.

The minutes of the June 17, 2009 meeting were approved as presented. Ms. Salzberg suggested that the list of advisory council members and the meeting minutes be placed on the City's website.

Linda Walsh reported on the seasonal and H1N1 flu clinic plans. A community-wide clinic has been scheduled for October 7 from 10:00 AM – Noon and from 3:00 – 5:00 PM. This clinic will serve Newton residents over age 50 and those over 18 with a chronic medical condition. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has suggested that local health departments complete seasonal clinics early in order to conduct H1N1 clinics in late October and November.

The H1N1 vaccine and all supplies associated with its administration are being provided by the federal government. The CDC has established target groups to which public health and health care providers should direct their efforts. These include pregnant women, caregivers of infants under six month of age, health care workers, first responders, and children under the age of 24. The median age in Massachusetts of people contracting H1N1 influenza last spring was 14. The department will be expanding its school-located seasonal flu immunization program this fall. We have again contracted with Maxim Health Services to provide both Flumist and vaccine in the middle and high schools. Parents must pay the full cost of immunization, which is \$35 for Flumist and \$25 for injection. Anyone who cannot afford to pay will receive immunization from the department at no charge.

Ms. Walsh described the surveillance system that has been instituted in the Newton Public Schools to track absenteeism from influenza-like illness, or ILI. The department used a labor-intensive surveillance system in the spring. Oak Hill Middle School had the highest ILI absenteeism, peaking at an estimated 15% for much of a week. The department consulted with the administration of the Newton Public Schools and epidemiologists from Massachusetts Department of Public Health regarding closing the school. It was decided to keep the school open, and the ILI absenteeism rate dropped after the Memorial Day weekend. The CDC and Massachusetts Department of Public Health have clarified recommendations relative to school closure decisions, and our decision fell within their recommended guidelines. The department worked diligently to keep the Oak Hill, school, and city community well informed about what was happening in the school and the rationale for the decision to keep the school

opened. We have received much positive feedback for this effort, including a testimonial resolution from the Board of Aldermen.

Dr. Marcus asked if anyone tracked the number of hits to the web page set up for flu information. The city website does not track hits to individual pages. Mr. Frassica asked about vaccine storage and security, especially power security. The department is looking into purchasing an alarm that would alert someone offsite in case of power failure. The department anticipates receiving funds to prepare for the H1N1 vaccine campaign to assist with purchases such as these. The department will submit a request for vaccine to conduct clinics for school children and other high risk residents.

Mr. Naparstek noted that the department is assessing its efforts to provide the ten essential services expected of a health department. One of these services is "Give people information they need to make a healthy choices," (*Operational Definition of a functional local health department*, NACCHO, November 2005). The department has developed a 52-week schedule of health education articles that it has pitched to the Newton TAB. We are awaiting a response from the editor.

The Board of Aldermen is considering revising the Newton Ordinances to include a prohibition on the sale of tobacco products in health care institutions. Mr. Naparstek presented the proposed ordinance to the council and asked that they consider voting in support of it. Ms. Feldman reviewed the proposed revision and raised a number of both legal and philosophical concerns about the ordinance and its wording. As a result, the matter was tabled and Mr. Naparstek was asked to contact the author of the ordinance to provide Ms. Feldman's suggested language changes.

The advisory council members who were present were given a copy of the City of Newton Appointed Committee Handbook and were asked to fill out a card signifying that they had received the document. The Handbook provides background on matters of law governing municipal committees.

Departmental updates were then presented. They are attached to these minutes.

There being no additional business, the meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

J. David Naparstek
Commissioner of Health and Human Services

The next meeting will be held:

Wednesday, November 18 at 7:00 PM